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HUMAN IGNORANCE

OR

NINETEENTH CENTURY

BIBLE OF TRUTH,

AND

NEW-ER TESTAMENT,

RESERVED BY HUMAN IGNORANCE TO BE TAKEN FROM

WOLVES

IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

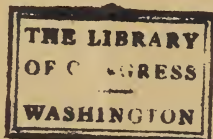
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1877

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## PREFACE.

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The author of this book is not known by any human being. No one but an ignoramus, made dogmatic by his supposed knowledge, will pretend to know him. Perhaps this dogmatism will be less common, and modesty more common, when common people learn that their boasted "common sense" is only "common ignorance." They need a little *uncommon* sense to keep them from that assumption of knowledge whereby they expose their profound ignorance of their ignorance. The author of the book is unknown, even to himself.



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# HUMAN IGNORANCE.

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“What mortal knows  
Whence comes the tint and odor of the rose?  
What probing deep  
Has ever solved the mystery of sleep?”

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## GENTLEMEN AND LADIES:

“We do not steadily bear in mind,” says Darwin, with a noble scientific humility, “how profoundly ignorant we are of the condition of existence of every animal.” There is a profound ignorance which comes much nearer home to us than that—a profound ignorance of the condition of existence of the *human* being. Moreover, is there not a still profounder ignorance, which comes still nearer home, viz: a profound ignorance of our ignorance?

In this lecture, gentlemen and ladies, I propose to make known a few of my thoughts on human ignorance—doubtless they will enable you the better to appreciate the absolute profundity of my own. I call myself—Professor of Ignorance.

We need light to see our ignorance. Like a guide in a “Mammoth Cave,” I will try to strike a match, that we may the better realize, by comparison, how vast and profound is the darkness. Perhaps the most calamitous thing in this world for the *thinker*—the man who is anxiously peering into the darkness—is, that he *cannot* see—that his thoughts fathom nothing. He must absolutely die in his ignorance. He is not like the miser who saves his candle and dies in the dark; he has no candle, and dies in the dark; he *must* die in the dark.

The French philosopher, Bayle, says: “Blaize Pascal was one of the sublimest geniuses that the world ever produced;” and Pascal says: “I know not who has put me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I am myself. I am in terrible ignorance of all things. I know not what is my body, what my senses, what my soul—and that very part of me which thinks what I am saying, which reflects upon everything, and upon itself, no more knows itself than the rest.”

It is a common remark among literary men—and they feel the sad truth most profoundly—that the more a man learns the clearer he sees that he is ignorant. The brighter the genius, the blacker the cloud; for the genius is the one to realize most clearly that he *cannot* see—that he can *never* know. No won-

der, then, that Pascal should exclaim—"I am in terrible ignorance of all things!" No wonder that such a genius should have shuddered at the impenetrable darkness!

It is a dogma of modern science, that all the phenomena of the natural world, without exception, are subject to unalterable law. Herbert Spencer has expressly defined the meaning of the term "law," as it is used in this connection. He says—"Constant course of procedure' we call 'law.'" This constant course of procedure, then, which we observe, is what I mean when I make use of his term, "law."

Henry Thomas Buckle—one of the best thinkers of modern times—wrote his "Introduction to the History of Civilization in England," as a thoroughly philosophical answer to this one vast question: "Are the actions of men, and therefore of society, governed by fixed laws?"—and I wish to call your attention to the decisive and unanimous answer given to this question, by the most eminent philosophers of Europe and America—by the most acute thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries;—and I shall do this in their own language, because their ideas are the most forcibly expressed by themselves.

Literary men—particularly among the German philosophers—generally regard Ralph Waldo Emerson as the most profound thinker the American continent has as yet produced; and EMERSON says: "The day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity in things, to the *omnipresence of law*."

Moreover, Herbert Spencer, who ranks as the most able philosopher England has produced in the nineteenth century, says: "Rightly understood, the progress from deepest ignorance to highest enlightenment, is a progress from entire unconsciousness of law, to the conviction that law is universal and inevitable."

Nor is the language of Professor Draper less emphatic. In his "Intellectual Development of Europe," he says:

"Too commonly do we believe that the affairs of men are determined by a spontaneous action or free will; we keep that overpowering influence which really controls them in the background. In individual life we also accept a like deception, living in the belief that everything we do is determined by the volition of ourselves, or of those around us; nor is it until the close of our days that we discern how great is the illusion, and that we have been swimming, playing, and struggling in a stream, which, in spite of all our voluntary motions, has silently and resistlessly borne us onward."

This, also, is the decision of that most eminent philosopher, David Hume. He says:

"We feel that our actions are subject to our will, on most



occasions, and imagine we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing; because when, by a denial of it, we are provoked to try, we feel that it moves easily every way, and produces an image of itself even on that side on which it did not settle. This image, or faint motion, we persuade ourselves, could have been completed into the thing itself; because, should that be denied, we find, upon a second trial, that it can. But these efforts are all in vain; and whatever capricious and irregular actions we may perform, as the desire of showing our liberty is the sole motive of our actions, we can never free ourselves from the bonds of necessity. We may imagine we feel a liberty within ourselves, but a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation and temper, and the most secret springs of our complexion and disposition. Now, this is the very essence of necessity."

Permit me to give you one little anecdote to illustrate this entire dependence of the choice or will, on the existing circumstances. A gentleman was boasting in a crowd one day, of the entire freedom of his will. "Please," said I, "hold up your hand," and he held it up. "Now crook your finger," and he crooked it. "Didn't you crook your finger because you willed to do it?" "Yes, sir, I did." "But didn't my will control yours in making you crook your finger?" "Why yes, it did at that particular time; but try me again." "Very well," said I, "hold up your finger again. "Now are you all ready?" "Yes, I am." "I want you to make sure," said I, "because my will is going to control yours, although you have determined it shall not. Are you *sure* that you are ready?" "Yes, sir, I am." "Don't crook your finger," and he crooked it. "Ah! I told you not to do it on purpose to make you do it. Did not my will control yours, even when you determined it shouldn't?" "It did," said he, "I must admit." "Now, said I, the third time, or the three thousandth time, the crooking of the finger will be either voluntary or involuntary. Of course if it is involuntary, the will has nothing to do with it; but if it be voluntary, it will be because something moves or controls your will to crook your finger. Boast no more, therefore, of the *freedom* of the will." Will is nothing but thought, and free-will or freedom is a myth; it has no existence.

Please permit me to ask each one of you, how did you get your first thought, when a babe? Was it by your own act or will? I am certain that your answer is, "No." Was it by Nature's law or constant course of procedure? Answer—Yes. Did your second thought come in the same way? Answer—Yes. Did the 3d? 4th? 5th? 6th? Answers—Yes. Were you in

any sense *free* to get such thoughts as you chose? Answer—No. Did you ever see any animal, plant, or being, that was not subject to fixed laws? Ans.—No.

“Every event that happens,” says — — (?) “is the resultant of an infinite series of forces. Our thoughts, our actions, our development, are prescribed like the growth of a plant. Given the data of being, and the exact civilization and barbarism of to-day are the inevitable result; and they would inevitably follow again were the same conditions again given. Nothing could have been in the *least particular* otherwise than it is. The current of events bears us forward as ice is swept along by the swollen current of the spring floods. We drift on the stream of circumstances; our course is veered by the lightest touch; we float awhile—fifty or seventy years—and finally are absorbed into the restless stream of infinite force.”

If this be so—if law be universal and inevitable—do we know of any freedom or free-will in the universe? Answer—*Not any.*

If then our poor, illiterate ancestors—ages ago—struggling in the forest for existence—perhaps but a little higher than other naked races of savage barbarians, or hungry animals around them—were the products of these universal and inevitable laws, were they responsible for those laws? Answer—No. Were they irresponsible for them? Answer—Yes. What are those laws? Answer—Nature’s constant course of procedure. Do you suppose that our fathers and mothers—our dear, old, trembling grand-fathers and grand-mothers, just dropping into the grave, are *guilty!* for having been the result of Nature’s constant course of procedure? Answer—Just as guilty as the army of delicate, bright-eyed babes, whom Nature, with ceaseless march, is already rocking in the cradle to supply their places.

Every man is a natural production, both in body and mind, and is no more guilty than any other natural production. He is not either better or worse than all other natural productions.

It is for this reason that the Hindoo philosopher—Krishna says: “There is none who is worthy of my love or hatred.” Ralph Waldo Emerson says: “I can see nothing at last, in success or failure, than more or less of vital force supplied from the eternal.” Even that old Roman—Cicero—said in the Latin, ages ago: “Every man cleaves to the doctrine he has happened upon, as to a rock against which he has been thrown by a tempest,” and it seems astonishing how easily he is thrown upon rocks where he sticks. If he is born in Arabia, he is Mahomedan; if in Spain, he is Roman Catholic; if at Salt Lake City, he is Mormon, &c.: the mere accident of birth, and surrounding circumstances, making him Mahomedan, Christian,



Mormon, or anything else. This shows how surely mankind are controlled by law. Is it charitable, then, to charge any of these poor, ignorant, superstitious people with *responsibility* for their opinions or religions? Some one (?) says:

"All effects flow from competent causes, for which neither these effects nor the instrumentalities through which they are produced, are responsible. Every individual is constantly surrounded by circumstances, every one of which has a modifying influence upon all his movements. The slightest of things frequently determines diametrically opposite action from that which would have followed, had it not been present. A feather turns the nicely balanced scales this way or that, according as its influence is applied to this side or that. And thus it is with all human actions—the smallest circumstance often deciding not only the fate of individuals, but also the destinies of nations.

"The individual himself is best acquainted with the circumstances controlling *him*, therefore the jurisdiction as to what are *duties* resides within the individual; no second person being competent to decide or enforce supposed duties for others. Each individual produces just such actions as his inherited capacities, modified by educational influences and surrounding circumstances determine; and all action is legitimately and logically the result of them, and not of any independent choosing of the individual; for his choice or choosing is not at all independent, but is entirely *dependent* upon the circumstances existing at the time; and what he does, whether it be mental choosing or bodily action, he does in consequence of the aforesaid existing circumstances; and because under these existing, controlling circumstances he cannot do differently; and he did not create the circumstances; neither did he create himself; being at any given time a product—a result of other causes. Then where rests the responsibility? It is affirmed that it is in the individual; but no logical or sufficient reason can be adduced to maintain it." This settles the question of responsibility.

In his figurative language the Arab says: "No man can by flight escape his fate. The Destinies ride their horses by night."

Timid mortals who dare not look this truth in the face, and who cannot bring any argument to refute this reasoning, cry—"Oh! it will never do to say this!" But those who are brave enough to cling to truth, and are fully determined to follow her *where-soever* she may lead, have nothing to do with this cowardice; and want the *facts*, let them be what they may.

Why, it may be asked, if law be so universal and inevitable, do you say anything at all? The question is sensible enough, or rather would be, if it were not like asking the Mississippi why it should continue to flow; or, old father Time why he should not stop, throw away his scythe, and shed that last lock of hair

from his old bald pate. My answer is—I, too, am in the rushing stream, and this lecture also.

But, says another, would you do nothing with robbers and murderers? I answer—these same laws will also make *me* act according to circumstances. Nature's ferocity is in me also. Doubtless, I should join in trying to stop them; but I should hope to do this without malice; and, unless I was driven by passion to act as ferociously as the robber, I would not punish for the sake of *punishing*, knowing as I do that the robber's conduct was simply the necessary product of his surroundings. Nature gives to different men different temperaments. One man's temperament is such, that he cannot submit to an insult at all, but he flies into a state of furious passion. Another is perfectly cool, and thinks with Emerson—"If a man is insulted he can be insulted, all his affair is not to insult." Of course we are sometimes obliged to restrain the cruel and *vicious*, as they are called; but, if we do this in a cruel and vicious manner *to punish*, what better are we than they? Would it not be better that our efforts should, if possible, be directed towards restraining and reforming, rather than be dictated by anger or revenge, or a desire *to punish*?

"On the theory of Necessity (we are told) a man cannot help acting as he does; and it cannot be just that he should be punished for what he cannot help.

"Not if the expectation of punishment enables him to help it, and is the only means by which he can be enabled to help it?"  
—JOHN STUART MILL.

So far as the civil law alters or controls the aforesaid Necessity—preventing the so-called criminal act—so far, I would approve of it; but I would not approve of it on the principle that the man was *guilty* whom circumstances caused to commit the act.

LORD BACON says:—

"In seeking revenge a man is but even with his enemy, but in passing the offence over he is superior." Perhaps we shall outgrow our old prejudices. Let us remember that "the first doubt was the womb and cradle of progress; and that from the first doubt, man has continued to advance."

"In every age," says INGERSOLL, "some thinker, some doubter, some investigator, some hater of hypocrisy, some despiser of sham, some lover of the right, has gladly, proudly, and heroically, braved the ignorant fury of superstition for the sake of man and truth. These men were generally torn in pieces by the worshipers of the gods. Socrates was poisoned because he lacked reverence for some of the deities. Christ was crucified by a religious rabble for the crime of blasphemy." It is enough to make one almost insane with pity to think what man in the

long night of ignorance has suffered from these foolish superstitions: but the human mind, by the aid of science, seems to be breaking the chains of priestcraft; and the hope is, that so far as these old superstitious religions are concerned, "the morning is breathing upon us": although it may yet require a struggle of centuries, before "the reddening twilight can break into the full lustre of day."

But, Gentlemen and Ladies, in order to realize our state of *ignorance*, we must remember that Nature's constant course of procedure, so far as *we know*, has nothing at all to do with cause and effect.

The philosopher David Hume, says EMERSON, owes his fame to one keen observation, that no copula had been detected between cause and effect, either in physics or in thought; that the term, cause and effect, was loosely or gratuitously applied to what we know only as consecutive, not at all as causal. Most people who have not reflected upon this subject suppose that it is perfectly easy to see why a cause should produce an effect; but the truth is, they do not know why a cause should ever produce an effect, in any conceivable case.

Hume is exactly correct in saying we can discover no copula or link between cause and effect, either in physics or in thought; neither do we *know* that there is any copula. All that we *know* about it, if we know anything, is, that one thing *follows* another.

In hopes, my hearers, that you may see I am right, I will give two or three illustrations in physics.

Suppose you have an iron rod one foot long. Call one end A, the other B.

A—————B.

It is supposed that iron is composed of atoms; that these atoms are indestructible and unalterable. If the iron rod be placed in the fire, it is believed the atoms will be driven farther apart; because the iron becomes larger. It is supposed that these atoms never touch each other; and that they are held near each other by some unknown something called *attraction*. These atoms may be as far apart, compared with their size, as the planets or stars compared with theirs. Perhaps these atoms attract each other: perhaps they are driven towards each other by something external. We do not certainly know whether they are attracted or driven; nor do we know what the attraction or driving force can be: perhaps they are not either driven or attracted. In short, we do not know why the atoms should be held together at all.

It, then, you take hold of the iron rod at the end A, and pull, why should it draw the other end, B, towards you? Why should this effect follow the cause? Answer: We do not

know. Not knowing why the atoms of iron should be held together at all, we have no means of knowing why the other end of the rod, B, should follow the end, A. To say that B follows A, because A attracts it, is mere verbiage—a mere quibbling with words—if we have no knowledge at all, what *attraction* can be. The simple truth, then, is, we have not the slightest knowledge why this effect should follow the cause.

But again: Suppose there are no atoms in the iron rod: then why does not iron, in a liquid state, adhere as firmly as in a solid state? Why does it adhere at all? Answer. We do not know.

My hearers will not fail to observe that this simple example covers immense ground, and reaches an infinite number of what are called “causes” and “effects” in physical operations. For instance, can we tell why water should run down hill when we do not know at all what the attraction of the earth can be? No, we certainly cannot. Another kind of illustration: Please look at my hand.—(Showing it.) I will now crook my finger.—(Crooking it.) Do you see that the finger is crooked? How could my thought that I would crook my finger crook it? Why should this effect follow the cause? Answer: We do not know.

But this is not only true in physics, it is also true in thought. Can we tell why one thought should suggest or cause another thought? We certainly cannot; for we have not even the slightest suspicion *how* one thought possibly *can* produce another thought. Of course, then, the *why* it should do so is entirely beyond our ken. Try as many examples as you choose, and you will find that in no conceivable case do we ever know *why* an effect should follow a cause; much less can you tell why a cause should *produce* an effect?

These are, most assuredly, very striking examples of our profound ignorance; but I shall present you with far more striking examples than these.

It is recorded, as a saying of Turgot, that he who had never doubted of the existence of matter, might be assured he had no turn for metaphysical disquisitions. Nevertheless, I shall invite all of my hearers who wish to follow *truth* wherever it may lead, and not falsehood, even if truth lead into Cimmerian darkness, to listen attentively; because I am anxious that, if I *do* adhere to the simple truth, my hearers should feel fully convinced of the fact.

Let us once more think of our iron rod. Do we certainly *know* that there is such a thing as iron outside of our minds, or souls, or spirits, or thoughts, or inner-self, or whatever name we choose to call it?



"I *know!*" shouts the ignoramus, "*that there is iron!* because I see it, and have it in my hand."

Let us assume, then, for the sake of the argument, that there is such a thing as mind, or soul. On this assumption, then, what is it that really sees? What is it that actually performs that marvelous feat of seeing? Is it this outside optical instrument called the eye? or is it the inner man called soul or mind that sees? You do not suppose that your eye knows anything—can learn anything—or ascertain anything? Doubtless you say it must be the soul, spirit, or mind, that ascertains there is an object, or really *sees*. Very well, what hears? Why, the same thing. If the spirit does the seeing, it doubtless does the hearing also. What tastes? smells? feels? and thinks? Doubtless you will reply:—"It is something we call mind or soul." Well, then, if all the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and thinking are in the mind, spirit, or soul, or whatever you choose to call it; what evidence have we that there is any *outside world at all?*—any such thing as *matter?* For what possible means have we of ascertaining anything, except by seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling, or thinking? Answer: We have none. And if these six things only exist in the mind or soul—if they are all purely mental or spiritual experiences—why, then, our *knowledge* is limited by, or confined to, these experiences. We know of nothing outside of them. Have we, then, *any* means of *knowing* that there is a material world outside of these experiences? Answer: We have none. Can we, then, have any knowledge at all of *matter?* Answer: Not *any*.

This is the transcendental view—the view of one of the clearest-headed of all thinkers—Bishop Berkley. This is also the view of Emerson—of Thoreau—of Agassiz—of Hawthorn—of Huxley—of Fichte, and a host of other German philosophers;—in fact, of every great intellect in Europe or America. I place Bishop Berkley's name first, because his piercing intellect was the first to see and prove that—using his own words—"We have no certain assurance of the existence of matter." Before Bishop Berkley's time hardly any one ever *doubted* our absolute *knowledge* of the existence of *matter!* Since his time every able thinker doubts it.

We do not assert that there is no matter; we simply say, with all modesty, we do not know whether there is or not.

Please listen for one moment to one argument only of Bishop Berkley's.

"If there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now." Now comes the proof: "Suppose—what no one can deny pos-

sible—an intelligence, *without the help of external bodies*, to be affected with the same train of sensations or ideas that *you* are, imprinted in the same order and with like vividness in his mind: I ask whether that intelligence hath not all the reason to believe the existence of corporeal substances represented by his ideas, and exciting them in his mind, that *you* can possibly have for believing the same thing? Of this there can be no question—which one consideration were enough to make any *reasonable* person suspect the strength of whatever arguments he may think himself to have for the existence of bodies without—that is outside of—"the mind."

The German philosopher, Ueberweg, says: "Undoubtedly this is true, and in dreams we actually have the very belief without any grounds for it."

This is unanswerable. This settles the question as to our actual *knowledge* of the existence of matter. We cannot get outside of our consciousness. Perhaps there *is* an outside world, but whether there is or not is unknown to us. We do not, and cannot, certainly know it.

We have been reasoning on the supposition or assumption that something called *soul* exists. We will now look a little deeper.

Professor Huxley—the eminent English scientist—says :



"Our knowledge of anything we know or feel is nothing more or less than a knowledge of states of consciousness. And our whole life is made up of such states. Some of these states we refer to a cause we call 'self'; others to a cause or causes which may be comprehended under the title of 'not-self.' But neither of the existence of 'self,' nor of that of 'not-self,' have we, or can we by any possibility have, any such unquestionable and immediate certainty as we have of the states of consciousness which we consider to be their effects. They are not immediately observed facts, but results of the application of the law of causation to those supposed facts. Strictly speaking, the existence of a 'self' and of a 'not-self' are hypotheses by which we account for the facts of consciousness. They stand upon the same footing as the belief in the general trustworthiness of memory, and in the general constancy of the order of nature—as hypothetical assumptions which cannot be proved, or known with that highest degree of certainty which is given by immediate consciousness. Descartes' celebrated formula—"I think therefore I am," is unphilosophical, for the 'I' in 'I think' is assumed. Secondly, 'I think' is not one simple proposition, but three distinct assertions contained in one. The first of these is, 'something called *I* exists'; the second is 'something called thought exists'; and the third is, 'the thought is the result of the action of the I.'



"Now, it will be obvious to you that the only one of these three propositions which does not admit of doubt is the second, viz : that something called thought exists. *It* cannot be doubted, for the very doubt is an existent thought. But the first—that something called *I* exists, and the third—that the thought is the result of the action of the *I*—whether true or not, may be doubted, and have been doubted. For the assertor may be asked, 'How do you know that the thought is not self-existent? or that a given thought is not the effect of its antecedent thought, or of some external power?'

"Whatever the universe may be, all we can know of it is the picture presented to us by consciousness. This picture may be a true likeness—though how this *can be* is inconceivable.

"We thus see clearly and distinctly," says Huxley, "and in a manner which admits of no doubt, that all of our knowledge is a knowledge of states of consciousness. Thus it is an indisputable truth that what we call the material world is only known to us under the forms of the ideal world."

This is *TRUE*, whether it can or can not be seen by that boasted  "*common sense*," which Professor Huxley has most justly labelled  "*common ignorance*."

It may be said : "*If matter does exist, perhaps soul is matter;*" or, "*If soul does exist, perhaps matter is soul.*" Herbert Spencer, with the keenest penetration and most consummate ability, truly says :

"The Materialist, seeing it to be a necessary deduction from the law or correlation, that what exists in consciousness under the form of feeling, is transferable into an equivalent of mechanical motion, and by consequence into equivalents of all the other forces which matter exhibits; may consider it therefore demonstrable that the phenomena of consciousness are material phenomena.

"But the Spiritualist, setting out from the same data, may argue with equal cogency, that if the forces displayed by matter are cognizable only under the shape of those equivalent amounts of consciousness which they produce, it is to be inferred that these forces, when existing out of consciousness, are of the same intrinsic nature as when existing in consciousness; and that so is justified the spiritualistic conception of the external world, as consisting of something essentially *identical* with what we call mind.

"Manifestly the establishment of correlation and equivalence between the forces of the outer and the inner worlds, may be used to assimilate either to the other, according as we set out with one or other term."

This shows that if soul be matter, then the Materialists may

be right in holding that nothing but matter exists; and if all matter be soul, then the Spiritualists may be right in holding to the exclusive existence of souls; but that most distinguished philosopher, Fichte, shows most conclusively that we do not *know* that *either* exist.

Frothingham in his admirable "History of Transcendentalism in New England," says: "Fichte accepted without hesitation the *confinement* within the limits of consciousness. The facts of consciousness, he said, are all we have. The states and activities of the mind, perceptions, ideas, judgments, sentiments, or by whatever other name they may be called, constitute, by his admission, all our knowledge; and beyond them we cannot go. Of the outward world he knew nothing and had nothing to say; he was not concerned with that. The mind is the man, the history of the mind is the man's history; the processes of the mind report the whole of experience; the phenomena of the external universe are mere phenomena, reflections, so far as we know, of our thought; the mountains, woods, stars, are facts of consciousness, to which we attach these names. To infer that they exist because we have ideas of them, is illegitimate in philosophy. The ideas stand by themselves, and are sufficient of themselves.

"The mind is first, foremost, creative and supreme. It takes the initiative in all processes. He that assumes the existence of an external world does so on the authority of consciousness. If he says consciousness compels us to assume the existence of such a world, that it is so constituted as to imply the realization of its conception, still we have simply the fact of consciousness; power to verify the relation between this inner fact and a corresponding physical representation, there is none. Analyze the facts of consciousness as much as we may, revise them, compare them, we are still within their circle and cannot pass beyond its limit.

"Is it urged that the existence of an external world is a *necessary* postulate? The same reply avails, namely, that the idea of necessity is but one of our ideas, a conception of the mind, an inner notion or impression which legitimates itself alone. Does the objector further insist in a tone of exasperation caused by what seems to him, quibbling, that in this case consciousness plays us false, makes a promise to the ear which it breaks to the hope—*lies* in short? The imperturbable philosopher sets aside the insinuation as an impertinence. The fact of consciousness, he maintains, stands and testifies for itself. It is not answerable for anything out of its sphere. In saying what it does it speaks the truth; the whole truth so far as we can determine."

"The reasoning by which Fichte cut off the certainty of a material world outside of the mind, told with equal force against

the *objective* existence of souls or a spiritual world. The mental vision being bounded by the mental sphere, its objects being there, and only there, with them we must be content. The mind has its domain, untrodden forests to explore, silent and trackless ways to follow, mysteries to rest in, light to walk by, fountains and floods of living water, starry firmaments of thought, continents of reason, zones of law; and with this domain it must be satisfied. God is one of its ideas; immortality is another; that they are anything more than ideas cannot be known."

This settles the question as to our knowledge of soul: if there are souls of any kind, we certainly do not and cannot know it.

As philosophers believe in the principle that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities, so also they hold a like principle with regard to the mind, that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perception.

If by *mind* is meant anything more than thoughts or perceptions, we have no knowledge of it:—*not any*.

"Doctrines which, like those under discussion, reject the ultimate data of consciousness as untrustworthy, oppose the aggregate convictions and experiences of men, and ignore the fundamental principles upon which society is constituted, are not *necessarily* to be rejected as false for these reasons, nor on account of any other 'logical consequences' whatever, however serious they may appear; unless such consequences involve a *reductio ad absurdum aut impossibile*. If science declares them true, they *must* be accepted as such *ruat cælum*; there is no appeal."

CHARLES ELAM.

"We know of no difference between matter and spirit, because we know nothing with certainty about either. Why trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important they may be, we do know nothing, and can know nothing?"

HUXLEY.

In his "Critique of Pure Reason," the great Kant has proved the absolute impenetrability of our knowledge of the essence of things. Our sensual and intellectual organs are not adapted to such knowledge. The ideality (*i. e.* objective non-reality) of time, space, and causality, taught by Kant, is the final death-blow of the *a priori* dogmatism of former systems. Our intellect can never go beyond the appearances of things,—the phenomena.

Having, then, no knowledge of our own soul or mind, how absurd to suppose we can know anything of the souls or minds of others—whether they be men, angels, gods, or devils. What are all these but mere thoughts or conceptions? A recent

writer makes this sensible remark :—" That God must ever remain a mere conception, even in the life hereafter, if such there be, will scarcely be denied, except by those who, like Brother Moody, fashion their god after a little seven-by-nine pattern of their own."

And what a wonderful pattern ! This anthropomorphic god goes to a little desert country at the east end of the Mediterranean, and has a child by a married woman ! Having successfully accomplished this feat on an insignificant little ball between Mars and Venus, so small that if looked for from Jupiter it would be lost in the sun's rays; his next charming exploit is to have himself, or his son, who " was equal to himself," and " was himself," and a third person named " Ghost," who was also himself ! *hung up on a gallows !*—a veritable scarecrow !

This all being so, Moody and Sankey, like Peter the Hermit, at the head of thousands of crazy fanatics, proceed, singing and shouting, on their way to the Holy Land. The Devil is to bathe in eternal fire and brimstone all who fail to join this rabble ! Sensible Chicagoans !—very ! victims of a kind of singing and howling mesmerism ! Bostonians—ditto ! *thoroughly* ditto ! Sensible !—*very!!!*

What Carlyle said of the English is certainly true of the Americans, viz., that the " British nation consists of thirty millions of people—mostly fools." Surely Dean Swift's wit is much needed.

Lord Chesterfield sent to Voltaire a letter in which was copied from the Dean's MS. this poem :

#### " THE DAY OF JUDGMENT."

" With a whirl of thought oppress'd,  
I sank from reverie to rest.  
A horrid vision seized my head,  
I saw the graves give up their dead !  
Jove, armed with terrors, bursts the skies,  
And thunder roars and lightning flies !  
Amazed, confused, its fate unknown,  
The world stands trembling at his throne !  
While each pale sinner hung his head,  
Jove, nodding, shook the heavens, and said :  
' Offending race of human kind,  
By nature, reason, learning blind ;  
You who through frailty stepp'd aside,  
And you who never fell from pride ;  
You who in different sects were sham'd,  
And come to see each other damn'd,  
(So some folks told you, but they knew  
No more of Jove's designs than you) ;  
— The world's mad business now is o'er,  
And I resent these pranks no more.  
— I to such blockheads set my wit !  
I damn such fools ! Go, go, you're bit.' "



The trouble with these little Moodyites is, that they cannot, or do not, think for themselves at all.

Not so with that most able and liberal French thinker, Gustave Florens; who says: "God and the human soul are exploded hypotheses." Of course until they are proved to exist, they are nothing but hypotheses. In our *experience* we have never encountered ghosts or souls apart from matter; nor in our experience have we ever encountered witches, gods or devils in the air. So far as our *experience* is concerned, we have never so much as in a single instance, either seen, tasted, felt, heard, or *smelt!* a single god, devil, goddess, witch or ghost; nor have we any certain *knowledge* that either of them exist, or ever have existed.

The human soul and god are both unthinkable: for the assumed soul, or little 'I,' is precisely as unthinkable as the assumed god or 'Infinite I.' Has it never occurred to you that the thing which thinks, if there be any such thing, cannot think of itself? That grand reasoner, Hume, says: "For my part when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a *perception*, and never can observe anything *but* the perception. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of *self* is derived; and consequently there is no such idea."

Can you know that a thing exists, if you cannot even think of it? Certainly not. I think you will all admit this. If, then, as Hume shows, we cannot think of *self*, or the I, or soul, do we *know* that it exists? Answer: No: we cannot certainly know that it exists. Not only is it true that we do not know what we are, but it is also true that we cannot even so much as *think* of ourselves. The 'I' is utterly unthinkable. A thought is *itself* the evidence of *its* existence, but it does not tell us anything about the origin of thought. We know the thoughts, perhaps, if we know anything, but we certainly do not know the thinker. All those eminent scientific thinkers of England, France and Germany—Hume, Huxley, Florens, and Fichte—concur in saying the existence of a soul or 'self' is a mere hypothesis. We certainly have no knowledge of its truth.

If, then, we have no knowledge of the Little Fellow, have we any knowledge of the Big Fellow?

Let us look at a mathematical demonstration that either *we* do not exist, or, an *Infinite God* does not exist.

First: If Deity is an infinite being, i. e. in extent, occupying all space everywhere, and is material, then there can be no *other* material being in the universe: for another being would be so

much added to infinity! making the absurd amount equal to  
Infinite being + finite being!

Secondly: If Deity is everywhere, as is asserted by those curious classes of dreamers called Mahomedans, Christians, Mormons, &c.—if he is an infinite spiritual being, occupying *the whole of space*—then there can be no other spiritual being *occupying space*: for it is a settled mathematical axiom that two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time: and it is an absurdity to believe they can.

There is, then, either no finite being in the universe, or, there is no infinite being.

Therefore, if Deity is an Infinite Being, there can be no other.

Corollary: If there is a finite being in the universe, there can be no infinite being. Q. E. D.

You will observe that in this exact mathematical demonstration I mean by the term *other* being, a being that is not God, or a part of God. If, as some intelligent thinkers say, finite beings are a part of the Infinite Being, then, Gentlemen and Ladies, we are all of us God, or a part of God, are we not?

“Swedenborg’s own words are: “In creation nothing lives but God himself.”

William H. Channing says: “In the strictest sense man is incarnate deity; is the Infinite Unity manifested in Finite Multiplicity. Not Jesus alone, but every spirit in human form, is divine. True piety is to be purely one’s own self; for this inmost power of life is God. Let us waste no time or power on fanciful theories of a heavenly hierarchy; or impertinent investigations into the mysteries of God: our true end is to be manly, and in that manliness to reveal here and now, Divinity.”

Spinoza saw plainly that there is no assigning a limited part to the Infinite; that Divinity is all or is nothing; that if the Divine be a reality, it must pervade all.

Spinoza’s philosophy, entirely pantheistic, holds that God is a being absolutely infinite—a substance consisting of infinite attributes. Substance is necessary and infinite, one and indivisible, and therefore God. Nothing exists except substance. Substance cannot produce substance, and consequently there is no such thing as creation, neither beginning nor end. All things move by fixed laws, without free will or contingency. God and the Universe are the same. All events happen by an immutable law of Nature, by an unconquerable necessity. God *is* the Universe or Nature producing a series of necessary movements or acts, in consequence of intrinsic, unchangeable, and irresistible energy.

That wise old Aristotle believed that God, the Universe and Nature were *one*, and, *in reality*, he entertained the modern



doctrine of Evolution. Some of the results which he arrived at are very grand. Thus, he concluded that everything is ready to burst into life, and that the various organic forms presented to us by Nature are those which existing conditions permit. Should the conditions change, the forms will also change. Hence there is an unbroken chain from the simple element through plants and animals to man, the different groups merging by insensible shades into each other.

Many people hoot at the idea of our being a part of God! Very well, if we are not, then it is mathematically demonstrable that, if finite beings occupy any portion of space, there is no infinite being occupying space. If souls are *anything*, they must be *somewhere*: if they are somewhere, they are in the *universe of space*: if they are not in the universe of space, they are *nowhere*: if they are nowhere, they are *nothing*—nothing but exploded hypotheses.

That fearless, independent German—BUCHNER—says: “That the world is not *governed*, as frequently expressed, but that the changes and motions of matter obey a necessity inherent in it, which admits of *no exception*, cannot be denied by any person who is but superficially acquainted with the natural sciences.”

\* \* \*

“What this or that man may understand by a governing reason, an absolute power, a universal soul, a personal God, &c., is his own affair. The theologians with their articles of faith, must be left to themselves.”

As for the unreasoning crowd of sectarians called Mahomedans, Christians, Mormons, &c., who believe in God and the Devil, and say you must have *faith*! you must have faith in Korans, Books of Mormon, or other unauthenticated and fabulous bibles, to keep you from eternal damnation in hell fire!—if *they* say all finite spirits are a part of God’s Spirit, please ask them as delicately as possible, whether it is exactly proper—as in that case the Devil is a part of God!—whether it is exactly orthodox and proper to worship the Devil!?

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But, let us take another view. Do you suppose that the universe is to come to an end? so that some time or other there will be absolutely nothing at all? I think I may venture to give your answer: “No.” Is it not equally as absurd and unreasonable to suppose there *ever was* a time when there was absolutely nothing at all? I think so, and I think it must appear so to you. Why, then, do some people speak of a “commencement”? or a “beginning”? We know of no greater probability of a beginning than an end. We have no evidence whatever of the *commencement* of a creator, or of the *commencement*

of a creation. I see no solid ground for believing there ever was a "creator" or a "creation." Do you say that because Nature is so wonderful and beautiful, that therefore it must have had a more wonderful and beautiful God to make it? The argument overthrows itself; for then God No. 1 must have had a still more wonderful and beautiful God No. 2, to create him! and God No. 2 must have had God No. 3, and God No. 3 must have had God No. 4, and so on, *ad infinitum*; and this infinite series of Gods would have had one "constant course of procedure"—would in fact simply be a part of the great Nature—conforming to its laws. We had better, therefore, be content with our dear old mother Nature, as we see her, and discard all these unnecessary gods as exploded hypotheses.

We often hear people persistently urge that there must have been an *intelligence*—a mental world or universe of ideas, or there could have been no material world, or universe of objects. But, says HUME: "A mental world, or universe of ideas, requires a cause as much as does a material world, or universe of objects; and, if similar in its arrangement, must require a similar cause. For, what is there in this subject which should occasion a different conclusion or inference? In an abstract view, they are entirely alike; and no difficulty attends the one supposition which is not common to both of them.

"Again, when we will needs force *experience* to pronounce some sentence, even on these subjects which lie beyond her sphere, neither can she perceive any material difference, in this particular, between these two kinds of worlds; but finds them to be governed by similar principles, and to depend upon an equal variety of causes in their operations. We have specimens in miniature of both of them. Our own mind resembles the one; a vegetable or animal body the other. Let experience, therefore, judge from these samples. Nothing seems more delicate, with regard to its causes, than thought; and as these causes never operate in two persons after the same manner, so we never find two persons who think exactly alike. Nor, indeed, does the same person think exactly alike at any two different periods of time. A difference of age, of the disposition of his body, of weather, of food, of company, of books, of passions; any of these particulars, or others more minute, are sufficient to alter the curious machinery of thought, and communicate to it very different movements and operations. As far as we can judge, vegetables and animal bodies are not more delicate in their motions, nor depend upon a greater variety or more curious adjustment of springs and principles.

"How, therefore, shall we satisfy ourselves concerning the cause of that intelligence or ideal world into which those people would trace the material? Have we not the same reason to

trace that ideal world into another ideal world, or new intelligent principle? But if we stop and go no further, why go so far? *Why not stop at the material world?* How can we satisfy ourselves without going on *in infinitum*? And, after all, what satisfaction is there in that infinite progression? Let us remember the story of the Indian philosopher and his elephant. It was never more applicable than to the present subject. If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other; and so on, without end? It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God. \* \* \* When you go one step beyond the mundane system, you only excite an inquisitive humor which it is impossible ever to satisfy.


“To say that the different ideas which compose the reason of the Supreme Being, fall into order of themselves, and by their own nature, is really to talk without any precise meaning. If it has a meaning, I would fain know why it is not as good sense to say that the parts of the material world fall into order of themselves and by their own nature. Can the one opinion be intelligible, while the other is not so? \* \* \*

“An ideal system arranged of itself, without a precedent design, is not a whit more explicable than a material one, which attains its order in a like manner; nor is there any more difficulty in the latter supposition than in the former.” \* \* \*

“Why should we think that order is more essential to one than the other? And if it requires a cause in both, what do we gain by a system which traces the universe of objects into a similar universe of ideas? The first step which we take leads us on forever. It were, therefore, wise in us to limit all our inquiries to the present world, without going further. No satisfaction can ever be attained by these speculations, which so far exceed the narrow bounds of human understanding.”

This shows those who assert that because there is a material universe there must previously have been an ideal one, how groundless are their reasons for such an assertion. Let them, then, simply and candidly acknowledge that they know nothing at all about any such intelligence, or ideal world.

Let them also always remember that it is not a greater mystery that matter should produce mind, than that mind should produce matter.

My Guide at the crater of Kilauea was mad because I would not throw my ‘lunch’ into the lake of red-hot lava to feed the Goddess Pele; and we are often not much better treated by those who dub themselves Christians, if we do not accept their god, and throw our dinners to their self-anointed  “divines”!

John Stuart Mill truly says: “It is impossible to ascribe

absolute perfection to the author and ruler of so clumsily-made and capriciously-governed a creation as this planet and the life of its inhabitants"; and affirms, that "Not even on the most distorted and contracted theory of good, which ever was framed by religious or philosophical fanaticism, can the government of nature be made to resemble the work of a Being at once *good* and *omnipotent*."

Of course, if there had been any creator who was both good and omnipotent, he could just as easily—and doubtless would—have created a world in which only happiness should dwell.

David Hume, reasoning on the supposition that a Deity exists, asks, how can you assert the moral attributes of the Deity, his justice, benevolence, mercy and rectitude, to be of the same nature with these virtues in human creatures? Allowing his power to be infinite, whatever he wills is executed: but neither man nor any other animal is happy: therefore he does not will their happiness. Admitting his wisdom to be infinite, he is never mistaken in choosing the means to an end: but the course of Nature tends not to human or animal felicity; therefore it is not established for that purpose. Through the whole compass of human knowledge, there are no inferences more certain and infallible than these. In what respect, then, do his benevolence and mercy resemble the benevolence and mercy of men?

Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered:

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able?

Then is he impotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

Then is he malevolent.

Is he both able and willing?


Whence, then, is evil?

How absurd, then, to believe that such a god exists. Can any reasoning, or reasonable man believe in a god who was entirely able to prevent evil, and who wished to do so, but who, instead of doing so, produced such a world of toiling and despairing victims? I venture to say that no scientific, philosophical reasoner believes such an absurdity.

"The order and energy of the universe, I hold to be inherent, and not imposed from without; the expression of fixed law, and not of arbitrary will, exercised by what Carlyle would call an almighty clockmaker."—TYNDALL.


"Anthropomorphism will, however, never be obliterated from the ideas of the unintellectual. Their god, at best, will never be anything more than the gigantic shadow of a man—a vast phantom of humanity—like one of those Alpine spectres seen in the midst of the clouds by him who turns his back on the sun."—DRAPER.



It is obvious to us all that Nature is the only God or Goddess that our *experience* has given us any knowledge of. If the god that many people have imagined to exist is *somewhere*, occupying *some* space, he must have *some* shape; if he is everywhere, occupying *all* space, he must be *everything*. Why not, then, suppose him to actually be everything? and have the shape of everything?—that is, to be simply Nature? The best way, then, is to discard those old heathenish myths—devils and gods, ghosts and souls—altogether, as exploded hypotheses; and let our dear mother Nature have the supremacy in our hearts. “Beyond Nature we cannot go, even in thought—above Nature we cannot rise—below Nature we cannot sink.” We are her children, and she has exhaustless wonders and beauties for us. We cannot love her too much; we cannot study her too much; and by simply adhering to the facts which she teaches, we shall have a scientific foundation for our opinions. Another advantage, which should be by no means ignored, although a negative one, is, that we shall no longer be swindled by these self-anointed  “divines”! Freed from false superstitions, our minds will be in a far better condition for the reception of scientific truth.

But is not truth dangerous? We must shut our lips, and not even whisper it! That, Gentlemen and Ladies, is priestcraft. “Out upon your guarded lips!” exclaims Emerson, “sew them up with pack-thread, do. Else, if you would be a man, speak what you think to-day in words as hard as cannon balls, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks, in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day. A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen, and philosophers, and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. \* \* \* ‘Ah! then,’ exclaim the aged ladies, ‘you shall be sure to be misunderstood.’ Misunderstood! It is a right fool’s word. Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. \* \* \* If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will seek to deserve that you should. I must be myself. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and moon whatever inly rejoices me, and the heart appoints.”

I trust, then, my hearers, that when you are looking for Truth, you will have nothing to do with fear. In this investigation I am trying to see what are the *Facts*. I am not at present discussing the question whether, if I follow the truth,

there will be a universal thaw and dissolution: even if I knew there would be, I would not teach what I believe to be false. Let the paid preachers do the lying. *How* the brazen-faced hypocrites *can* stand up and tell poor feeble-minded people that *they know what God wants!*—that *they know one of God's plans!* *Astonishing impudence!* "It is not permitted to enter the presence of the Creator Himself, so as to trace His conduct, and examine His actions," says Newton Crossland. But *do* the liars really pretend to know a *plan* of an *Infinite God's*? Yes, it is even true!—the hypocrites do not flinch!—they do not blush crimson!—although each one is conscious that he knows absolutely *nothing at all* concerning "*God's plan of salvation*"!—that he knows no more about God than do the feeblest of the feeble-minded men and women, out of whose trembling fears he is swindling his living. However incredible it may seem, these self-anointed  "*divines*"! will continue to do this as long as you give them your gold.

The German philosopher Heine says: "The *pfaffen*," (*pfaffe* is a sort of generic and contemptuous term for any sort of clergyman,) "fear God less than other men do—they use him for their own purposes. Like showmen at a fair, they exhibit God for money. They extol him with absurd panegyrics, blow a trumpet to glorify him, wear a smart uniform in his honor, and all the time *despise in their heart the poor, credulous, staring mob.*"

How cheering it is to turn to a brighter character. How much nobler seems the sentiment of that grand old Gascon—Michael de Montaigne. "I stand here," says he, "for Truth. I will not for all the reputation, and wealth, and honors of Europe, overstate the dry fact as I see it." When an honest scientific man is following truth, he is not to be deterred by the cowardly cry that truth is *dangerous*. His only question is, "Is this *Truth*?"

"There is no method of reasoning," says Hume, "more common, and yet none more blamable, than, in philosophical disputes, to endeavor the refutation of any hypothesis, by a pretence of its dangerous consequences to religion and morality. When any opinion leads to absurdity, it is certainly false; but it is not certain that an opinion is false because it is of dangerous consequence. Such topics, therefore, ought entirely to be forborne, as serving nothing to the discovery of truth."

Some think it dangerous to teach the young *the truth* on religious subjects: but if they are not told the truth, they will be led into falsehoods. Surely some counterpoise of truth is needed to shield them from the falsehoods taught in churches. I do not believe that truth is more dangerous for them than falsehood. I wish the young as well as the old to have the exact truth, and




the whole truth, if there be any such thing. It is a great weakness to be afraid of it.

But perhaps the weakest trait in the character of human beings is their disposition to believe, *without any evidence whatever!* that they are going to live after they are dead. We are not inclined to this irrational belief in the case of other animals when *they* die. We see all their carcasses decompose, and feel perfectly satisfied that they are absolutely dead. *They* are not to have blue wings to *their* shoulders: the man would be regarded as almost insane who should think so. Well, we have precisely the same evidence when a man dies, that he is absolutely dead: we see his carcass decompose in the same way; still there are those who will assert, without the slightest evidence of the fact, that the dead man is still alive! living somewhere else! Is not this equally absurd? equally insane? Has he not obeyed the great law of Nature—viz: death—like the others? Certainly. Is there any evidence that his case is different from the others? Not any at all. Why, then, are the ignorant taught that he is still alive?

Unfortunately for *truth*, hypocrites can fatten on falsehood. There is a class of them who make a fat living by teaching what they do not *know* to be true. They are well aware of the effect of outside appearances, and dress in solemn black.

“These black-coats are the only persons of my acquaintance who resemble the chameleon, in being able to keep one eye directed upwards to heaven and the other downwards to the good things of this world.” ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT.

When a person dies these black-coats hasten, like buzzards, to the carcass, and cunningly contrive to make some profit out of the distressed feelings of the mourners. One of them stands up, and, with a solemn face, affirms that the dead man—*forsooth*—is still alive! living somewhere above the stars! and this astonishing affirmation he makes, although, at that very time, perfectly *conscious* that he knows no more about it than a braying jackass does!—that he knows nothing at all about it; and, ere long, this  “*divine!*” most devoutly pockets the cash for so affirming. This he is enabled to do through the weakness of the poor ignorant people who believe his groundless and hypocritical assertions. In the midst of all this braying—praying *forsooth!*—the corpse lies perfectly rigid and still. The man is dead.


“There exists a phrase repeated *ad nauseam*, of ‘mortal body and immortal spirit.’ A closer examination causes us, with more truth, to reverse the sentence. The body is certainly mortal in its own individual form, but not in its constituents. It changes not merely in death, but also during life; however, in

a higher sense, it is immortal, since the smallest particle of which it is composed cannot be destroyed. On the contrary, that which we call "*spirit*" disappears with the dissolution of the individual material combination; and it must appear to any unprejudiced intellect as if the concurrent action of many particles of matter had *produced* any effect which *ceases with* the cause." BUCHNER.


"Though," says Fechner, "we are not *annihilated* by death, we cannot save from death our previous mode of existence. We return visibly to the earth from which we were taken."




"Nature, the all-engendering, and all-devouring, is its own beginning and end, birth and death. She produced man by her own power and takes him again." BUCHNER.

"Nothing in this world is perpetual; everything, however seemingly firm, is in continual flux and change; the world itself gives symptoms of frailty and dissolution. How contrary to analogy, therefore, to imagine that one single form, seeming the frailest of any, and subject to the greatest disorders, is immortal and indissoluble? What theory is that! how lightly, not to say how rashly, entertained!" DAVID HUME.

No wonder at Victor Hugo's scathing satire; no wonder he should convulse the French with laughter. "Immortality!" exclaims he. "We are to become angels with blue wings to our shoulders! Tell me now, isn't it Tertullian who says that the blessed will go from one star to another? Well, we shall be the grasshoppers of the skies! and then we shall *see God*! Tut, tut, tut. \* \* \* Legends and chimeras are given the ignorant to swallow about the soul, immortality, paradise, and the stars. They munch that: they spread it on their dry bread. He who has nothing besides has the *good god*—that is the least good he can have." So says Victor Hugo. But the calamitous fact connected with these chimeras is, that by means of them the poor are swindled out of their hard-earned dollars—are forced to eat "dry bread." For the sake of these Will-o-the-wisps—these legends and chimeras about immortality and paradise—they are persuaded, *most dishonestly!* to part with their solid gold and their solid silver. *These* are by no means Will-o-the-wisps, but realities, which they have most anxiously and most laboriously earned by the sweat of their brows. The swindling peddlers of the "plan of salvation" crave that gold and that silver. They want their deluded victims to give to them—these  "*divines*"!—*their* heaven here and now—cash in hand—and for it, promise the poor man *his* heaven *after* *he is dead!*

It pains my heart to see the feeble in intellect thus swindled. It seems to me that it would be far better for poor people to give their gold and their silver for a little butter, or a little

honey, to spread on their dry bread; or for a little meat to eat with it; and a far better "plan of salvation" for these self-anointed  "divines"! *not* to live at the expense of poor, laboring people; but go to work themselves and honestly earn a little butter, and a little honey, and a little meat to eat with some kind of bread which they have *not* swindled from the poor. *This* is a scientific "plan of salvation;" this is something incomparably more important than "*religion*"! this is *HUMANITY*.

Is there no way to convert these  "divines"! to this new religion of HUMANITY? Yes; I can tell you an effectual method. There is one way, and there is only one way. It is this:—Stop giving them your gold; stop giving them your silver; stop giving the swindlers your butter, and your honey, and your chickens, and your bread. Stop doing this, and they will at once begin to work—"to work out their salvation with fear and trembling." These  "divines"! have been bawling at us all our lives "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Now let these parasitical blood-suckers "work out *their* salvation with fear and trembling." If you stop paying them for lying, they will see the necessity of going to work, and like other people, try to make an honest living. *This* is the "plan of salvation"! Let these  "divines"! become converts to this religion, and the children of the poor will no longer have to knock off their toe-nails to catch chickens for them. This will indeed be a salvation. Salvation by this religion reaches even to the very *toe-nails*!

Perhaps there has rarely been a finer literary critic in Europe than M. Sainte Beuve. In a letter, speaking of the state of public opinion on religious questions in France, he says:

"Groan over it or not, as we may, Faith has disappeared. Science, let people say what they please, has destroyed it. It is absolutely impossible for vigorous, sensible minds, conversant with history, armed with criticism, studious of the natural sciences; any longer, to believe in old stories and old bibles.

\* \* \* We must march firmly on toward an order of reasonable, probable, corrected ideas, which beget conviction instead of belief, and which, while leaving to the vestiges of neighboring creeds all liberty and security, prepares in all new and robust minds a support for the future. Morality and justice are slowly forming on a new basis, not less solid than the old basis; more solid than it, because there shall enter it none of the puerile fears of infancy. So let us, men and women, cease to be children as soon as possible: this will be a hard task to a great many women—and to a great many men, too. But in the present state of society, herein, and nowhere else, lie the safety and virility of nations."

This being so, Ladies and Gentlemen, let our religion henceforth be the religion of Science. Let us investigate for ourselves until we find solid ground on which to rest; and not be fooled, like our ancestors, with fables and hobgoblins. When we can find no solid ground on which to rest, let us simply, and honestly, and *bravely*, acknowledge our ignorance. Let us simply say—"I do not know."

The clergy charge people with infidelity. "I for one," says DAVID PAGE, "reply that I regard it as a senseless accusation. If it were true, it is nothing that calls for defence, or needs any vindication. It is neither a fault nor a virtue in itself. Belief or disbelief are, of course, mere results of evidence, or of the lack of it."

The Mahomedans call the Christians infidels; and the Christians call the Mahomedans infidels; but the truth is, as DAVID PAGE, says, "there is no scepticism so offensive as that which doubts the facts of honest and careful observation; no infidelity so gross as that which disbelieves the deductions of competent and unbiased judgments."

The world is sick unto death with pretenders to knowledge; and more especially with these pretenders to *divine* knowledge!—these quacks in religion; and would gladly get rid of both them and their falsehoods. When we don't know, pray let us, with the simplicity of childhood, say, "we don't know." I have already in this lecture pointed out many instances of my ignorance—many things which I do not know. Of course there are multitudes of others that cannot be pointed out, for want of room. Some time ago an old lady had some curiously colored seeds in her hand, and I said, "Madam, what are those?" "Why!" says she, "they're beans." "Oh, yes! Madam," said I, "sure enough, I don't know *beans*!"

Practical men, so called, or men whose whole lives are devoted to making a pile of the yellow dirt called gold, often consider literary men, or thinkers, as mere dreamers. Very well, they are dreamers: but what does the practical man know?

"The thoroughly practical man knows the world as a mite knows cheese. The mite is born in cheese, lives in cheese, beholds cheese; if he thinks at all, his thoughts are of cheese. The cheese press, curds and whey, the frothy pail, the milk-maid, cow and pasture, enter not the mite's imagination at all. If any one were to ask him: "Why the world?" he would certainly answer: "Because cheese:" and when he is eaten by mistake, he tastes so thoroughly of cheese that the event remains unnoticed; and his infinitesimal identity becomes absorbed in the general digestion of caseine matter, without comment of the consumer."

Ask the thoroughly practical man why he lives in this world? and you will soon learn that his answer is "Because *GOLD*!"



Is the mite ignorant? So is the greatest thinker. He can *no more* fathom the universe. He *is*, as a mite in cheese.

I think now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have said enough to satisfy you that I am indeed an ignorant man. I say this with all honesty and sincerity. I must exclaim with Pascal: "I am in terrible ignorance of all things!"

It seems almost impossible to open the lips without making some kind of contradiction; and it seems more especially difficult for me when using words which heretofore have been *assumed* as denoting realities, like the words "I" and "you," when it appears there is no certain knowledge that they *do* denote realities. I must assume that there is an "I," like everybody else, although the fact that the "I" exists be totally unknown and unknowable. Please remember, Gentlemen and Ladies, that at the commencement of this lecture I warned you I was a professor of ignorance: I think, therefore, my hearers will feel much inclined to forbearance. The clown says: "I know I am, and I know I think." The philosopher says: "Thoughts exist, but we know nothing of the thinker. Nothing is known of the 'I,' it is not even thinkable." If we cannot even think of it, how is it possible to know that it exists? Consequently the philosopher cannot say as the clown does: "I know I am." If the existence of the 'I' is uncertain, how absurd to say: "I know."

Perhaps, Ladies and Gentlemen, you would be no little astonished, if the best friend you have, and the most intelligent, should inform you that you did not know that you existed; and perhaps I may have been preparing for some of you a surprise.

Gentlemen and Ladies: Do you indeed *know* that *you* exist?

Of course there may be the thought or *belief* that you exist; but this is not a question of *belief*: it is a question of absolute knowledge. We have already in a former part of this lecture considered the question as to any absolute knowledge of the existence of matter, or body; and have seen that the brightest intellects, and deepest thinkers of Europe and America concur in saying we cannot *know* that it exists. If, as Professor Huxley says: "It is an indisputable truth that what we call the material world is only known to us under the forms of the ideal world," no absolute knowledge of *body* can exist. Moreover, you do not consider your *body*, even if it does exist, to be *you*. If then you now say: "I know that I exist," please turn your thoughts inward, and see if you can tell me what the "I" is, that exists? You find thoughts, you say, for one thing. Very well, all right: there are thoughts. What else? "There are, sensations; for another thing: Seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling are sensations." All right, again. There are

houghts, and there are sensations. We need not stop to regard the question whether sensations are, or are not, thoughts. What else can you find in yourself? Examine closely. Come—I will give you a little time to examine. \* \* \* \*

Is there nothing else? Can you really discover nothing else? No, I can discover nothing else. Can you not find that little important personage “I,” that is supposed to do the thinking? No, I cannot find him. Can you even think of the “I”? No, I cannot. Well then you do not know that it exists; do you? No, I believe not. What is the sum total, then, that you *know* does exist? Answer. Thoughts and sensations. Very well. Then when I ask you, “Ladies and gentlemen: Is there any certain knowledge that *you* exist?—if by the *you* is meant anything *more* than thoughts and sensations, is not this the answer? No, there is no certain knowledge that we exist.

We are forced, therefore, to assume the existence of the “I,” before we can say “I know.” If I say, “I know nothing,” I am assuming that I know *that*—I am contradicting myself; for, if we do not know that the “I” exists, we cannot know that the “I” knows *anything*!

Often and vainly has this demand been made, viz: “What is Truth?”

No one has given a satisfactory answer.

I know of nothing more impressive in the history of Grecian philosophy than the plaintive acknowledgment of their ignorance by those grand old Greeks.

Anaxagoras most plaintively exclaims:—“Nothing can be known, nothing can be learned, nothing can be certain; sense is limited, intellect is weak, life is short.”

Xenophanes tells us that it is impossible for us to be certain, even when we utter the truth.

Parmenides declares that the very constitution of man prevents him from ascertaining absolute truth.

Pyrrho bids us reflect on the necessity of suspending our judgment of things, since we have no criterion of truth; so deep a distrust did he impart to his followers, that they were in the habit of saying: “We assert nothing; no, not even that we assert nothing.”

Protagoras, denying both intellectual and sensuous knowledge, publicly avowed that he knew nothing, not even his own ignorance!

And among the moderns, Fraser says: “The only conviction which the student of the history of human speculation can regard as necessary, is the conviction of our hopeless ignorance of all the mysteries of existence. Truth is hid in dark-



ness. It is not that we are unable to divine the mysteries of the soul and God; *the simplest phenomenon of sense defies our wit.*"

David Hume—"whom," says Professor Huxley, "I make bold to term the most acute thinker of the eighteenth century—even though that century produced Kant"—even Hume, finding that different chains of reasoning led to apparently contradictory conclusions, was forced to exclaim: "We have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all. For my part I know not what ought to be done in the present case." \* \* \* \* \* The *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than any other. Where am I? or what?"

How profoundly this most sensible, most excellent man—David Hume—felt his sad state of ignorance. Alas! this genius—this most towering intellect of the eighteenth century—could only exclaim, like Pascal:—

"Where am I? or what?"

Alas! alas! Where are we? or what?

*LOST!* without a ray of light—without a thread to guide—in a labyrinth of contradictions:

*LOST!* in this vast desert, where no one can tell the waters of life from a mirage:

*LOST!* in a tangled wilderness, where none but the unintellectual assert and shout—"I know!":

*LOST!* in the gloom of Cimmeria, where no one can tell where his head is; which exists only in space, which itself, (for aught anything the brightest intellects of the world *know to the contrary*,) exists only in his head—that is, in this meteor-thought—gone! ere you can say, "it is here":

*LOST!* in a shadow-world of images, where naught is everything, and everything is naught:

*LOST!* among sepulchres, in a vast universe of sepulchres, whether real or ideal, whose very dust has vanished:

Alas! alas! groping without eyes in this Mammoth Cave:

*LOST!* even from one's self!—the "I" being utterly unknown:

*LOST!* in the pitchy darkness of

HUMAN IGNORANCE.

## GENTLEMEN AND LADIES:

Assuming, then, in this profound darkness, the existence of those utterly unknown beings called "You," and "I," have I not in this lecture shown you that we are all *amazingly* ignorant? Was I not right in saying, at the commencement of this lecture, that we are all in profound ignorance of the condition of existence of the human being? and also right in asking the question: "Is there not a still profounder ignorance, which comes still nearer home? viz: a profound ignorance of our ignorance? Did I not properly call myself—Professor of Ignorance?"

My task is done.

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Is the prospect ahead then very dark? Yes; the prospect ahead is very dark; but we did not make ourselves; we did not make the darkness; we did not make our ignorance. WE! are not responsible.

Is there then *no* light?

Look at these names, which shine like fire-flies in the darkness:

BERKLEY.	GOETHE.	PAINE.
BUCKLE.	HAECKEL.	PASCAL.
CARLYLE.	HUMBOLDT	SPENCER.
DARWIN.	HUME.	SPINOZA.
DRAPER.	HUXLEY.	THOREAU.
EMERSON.	KANT.	TYNDALL.
FICHTE.	MILL.	VOLNEY.
GIBBON.	MONTAIGNE.	VOLTAIRE.

Their very names form a most brilliant galaxy. They sparkle with far more lustre than richest diamonds. They gladden the hearts of all who are really intellectual—of all who find in *science* a pure religion. These writers will cheer you on your journey. Then we have the Poets: and I will say—maugre the imbeciles who turn up their noses with horror—we have the masculine fibre of WALT WHITMAN and SWINBURNE.

How sublime Lord Byron becomes when speaking of our ignorance:

"Between two worlds life glitters like a star,  
'Twixt night and morn upon the horizon's verge.  
How little do we know that which we are;  
How less what we may be. The eternal surge  
Of time and tide rolls on and bears afar  
Our bubbles: as the old burst, new emerge,  
Lashed from the foam of ages; while the graves  
Of empires heave but like some passing waves."

To cheer us on our solemn march to our own graves, I have never seen anything finer than Theodore Carpenter's little poem, entitled:

"DEATH GIVES US MORE THAN LIFE."—STRAY POEM.

Aye more; it gives repose  
Sweeter than any life can e'er impart:  
Vast depth of peace, where every burdened heart  
At length will lose its woes.

I love not any creed  
That prates of deathless life beyond the sun.  
Enough of life when these poor years are done:  
I would have rest indeed.

I know my prison-bars:  
I build no toppling towers on shifting sands;  
I reach not upward with decaying hands  
To grasp the lofty stars.

The lowly grave is dear,  
And has no terrors; it is free from pain;  
Its couch is downy; and no secret bane  
Wrings the regretful tear.

And life—its wild uproar,  
Its fruitless hopes, its withered, blighted days,  
Its hours of anguish, turn the fainting gaze  
Toward the "voiceless shore." THEO. CARPENTER.

With your permission, Gentlemen and Ladies, I will close this lecture by repeating a very short poem, which I think is as remarkable for its sweet simplicity, as for its uncommon pathos and depth. I know not the author; but it must have been written by an old man who had fully realized the nothingness of life. No young man could have written it. It is indeed a sweet, sad poem. Its title is:

## "BY THE RIVER."

" I am sitting alone by the river,  
 And the willows are sweeping its brink ;  
 The shadows of twilight are falling,  
 And I sit by the river and think.

The shadows of the twilight grow deeper ;  
 The river is fading from sight ;  
 I can see the gray willows no longer,  
 And I am alone with the night.

In darkness and gloom, noble river,  
 Thou art noiselessly floating away ;  
 In darkness and gloom / am floating,  
 And whither, O say ! do I stray ?

The learning of Plato and Pascal  
 Is madly at work in my brain ;  
 I am satisfied about nothing,—  
 I feel and I reason in vain.

Does justice exist? Oh, where is it ?  
 Still the heart of the tyrant is stone,  
 Still his victims are toiling, despairing ;  
 Still he heeds not, he hears not, their moan.

'Tis vain that you tell me, hereafter  
 These things are not to be so ;  
 We are only able to reason  
 From that which we see and we know.


For centuries long have the curses  
 Of the heart-broken pierced to the skies ;  
 For centuries long has no answer  
 Returned to their desolate cries.

If I call upon Nature for comfort,  
 It is silent and grim as the grave ;  
 The winds will not stop at my question—  
 No reply from the long-sounding wave.

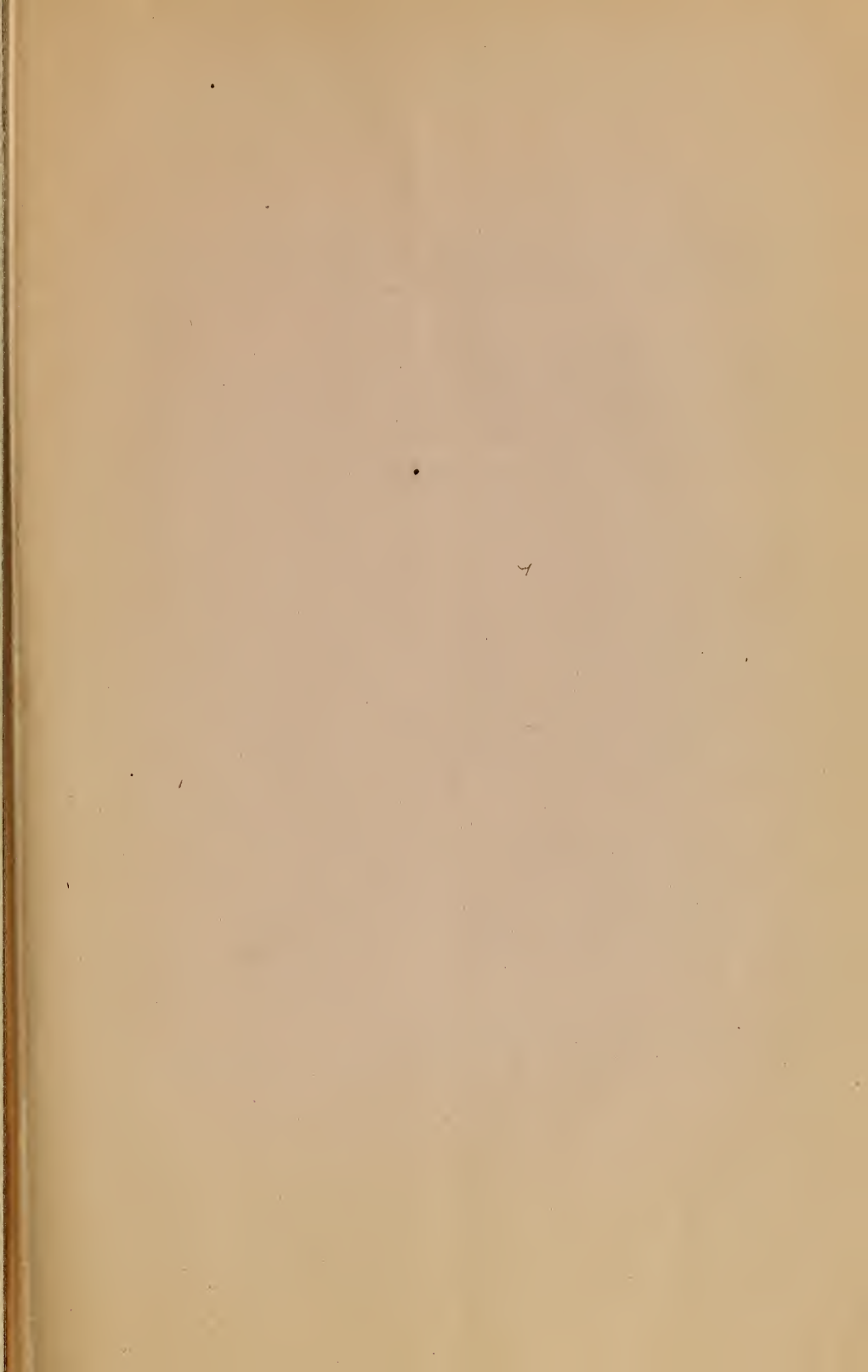
And the stars, as they glitter above me,  
 Pure and calm as the flakes of the snow  
 Look as cold on the sorrows of mortals  
 As they looked in the years long ago.

I am sitting alone by the river,  
 And the willows are sweeping its brink ;  
 The twilight has deepened to midnight,  
 And I sit by the river and think."

This is the poem. On account of my seventy years, I add this one verse :

Soon—I sit not alone by the river :  
 Soon the willows decay on its brink :  
 E'en this twilight of thought proves but darkness,  
 As we float down life's river. and  SINK !







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# ANTI-BULDOZING

*the Superstitions out of their money FOR THE LEBES OF Holy Tabernacles*

“*There are many who are so much attached to their superstitions that they will sacrifice their souls for them. They will give up their souls for the sake of a few pieces of money. They will give up their souls for the sake of a few pieces of money. They will give up their souls for the sake of a few pieces of money.*”

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**DISHONEST SWINDLERS!**